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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the impact of feminist scholarship on the professions of education and business, and looks critically at the assumptions on which the study of professionalism has been based. The paper begins with a feminist critique of professionalism, based on characteristics of professions and gender theory. Feminist theory is applied to education, focusing on research, textbooks, curriculum, gender bias, and efforts to empower teachers and students. Feminist critiques of research on teaching and learning are examined, using gender as a theoretical framework through which to critique male-dominated theories, reconceptualize teaching and learning, and restructure the educational system. Feminist scholarship on business is then addressed, and its limitation to the liberal perspective is noted. Three kinds of critiques are explored: research examining gender as a regulator of individuals' activity according to their biological sex, research on the cult of true womanhood as opposed to the cult of rationality, and research on the changing character of American business. It is concluded that as feminists begin to question the professionalism paradigm and to subject it to gender analysis, models can be built that are more sensitive to women as professionals and that can eliminate the dualisms that categorize women differently from their male colleagues. Notes concerning seven suggested readings are appended. (JDD)

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Feminism and Professionalism:

The Case of Education and Business

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Red Lion-Jantzen Beach in Portland, Oregon, November 1-4, 1990. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Feminism and Professionalism: A Case Analysis of Education and Business

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The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact of feminist scholarship on two professions--education and business. These fields have been selected because, although they have very different paradigms, they both incorporate disciplinary and technical knowledge, are both organized around the study of institutions, and both impose certain constraints on women. Together, business and education exemplify the professionalization of higher education in the number of degrees awarded at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and in their emphasis on preparation for careers.

It is generally acknowledged that education is a feminized profession; business is not. A feminist critique of these two fields may have strong conceptual and methodological implications for how we study the professions. I am guided by Joan Burstyn's admonition (1987) that we question a priori assumptions of the ways in which knowledge has been selected, constructed, distributed, and legitimated, "changing the lens" in how we study our subjects. I propose that we look critically at the assumptions on which the study of professionalism has been based, taking education and business as the basis for our analysis.

Feminist Critique of Professionalism

The concept of professionalism is problematic. The professions

are commonly organized as a hierarchy, differentiated as "major" and "minor" (N. Glazer, 1974) or "pure" professional and "semi-professional" (Etzioni, 1969) in which law and medicine are placed at the pinnacle and teaching, social work, and nursing fill the lower rungs. The characteristics of professionalism have generally been identified as membership in an occupational group, completion of theoretical and practical training, receipt of a degree or license, and adherence to a code of ethics. There are four sociological perspectives through which the professions are studied: in terms of autonomy, status, and power (Freidson 1970); linked to an ideology of professions as market organizations dominated by professional associations, institutionalized training, colleague control, work autonomy, licensing, and a code of ethics (Larson, 1977); as a culture dominated by pursuit of individual status, prestige, and economic rewards (Bledstein, 1976); and finally, as a system in which group norms define the professionalization process (Abbott, 1989).

However, if we use gender theory to look at both professionalism and the professionalization process, substantive differences emerge in our analysis. Historically, women's claim to professional status has been continually challenged by definitions of professionalism rooted in traditional male values of status, power, exclusivity, and autonomy. The concept of a hierarchical model in which professional associations and university-affiliated professional schools carry out the functions of training and certifying cadres of professionals only serves to reinforce male

domination of occupations. The influx of women into the professions in the past two decades has led to a number of critiques that question the underlying assumptions of the professionalization process, and in particular, the use of law and medicine as ideal models upon which the reform of other professions should be based. Larson questions our ability to reform the professions when "knowledge is acquired and produced within educational and occupational hierarchies which are, by their structure, inegalitarian, antidemocratic, and alienating" (1979, p. 243). By subjecting two disparate professions--education and business--to the "woman question," we can challenge unexamined assumptions about professionalism and, more specifically, determine the relative impact of feminist scholarship on these two fields.

Feminist Theory and Education

Feminist criticism provides a "powerfully argued critique of positivism and its social and political (not to mention) scientific ramifications" (Lincoln, 1989, p. 94). It has been mapped in several ways: as individualist and relational (Noddings, 1990), as distinct philosophical themes (Tong, 1989), and as generational phases, i.e., from sexual equality to the development of a female epistemology (MacKinnon, 1989). Regardless of how it is construed, feminist scholarship in education (and in the disciplines) sustains an underlying tension between those who ascribe to a basic dualism between men and women and the uniqueness of women's experience linked to female sexuality (MacKinnon 1989; Rich 1977); and those who look toward an androgynous society in which binary oppositions,

including sexual difference, will disappear (Hutcheon 1989).

Based on an extensive review of the literature in education, it is apparent that although the feminist perspective is being applied in research, its impact is less evident in textbooks, curriculum, and the assumptions on which educational study is based. In a review of 10 educational journals published between 1986 and 1990, I found a preponderance of empirical, atheoretical, quantitative research examining sex and gender differences in motivation, self-concept, academic achievement, and the relationship of gender, socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity (see Journal of Educational Psychology, American Educational Research Journal, and Journal of Educational Research). Greater evidence of feminist theoretical perspectives and more use of qualitative methodologies were found in Curriculum Inquiry, Harvard Educational Review, Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, and Teachers College Record. Three special issues that exemplify the liberal feminist perspective are "Sex Equity and Education" (Theory Into Practice 1986); "Sex and Sexuality in Education" (Peabody Journal of Education 1987), and "Gender and Education" (Sociology of Education 1989). A study of gender bias in education concluded that the ideology of gender embedded within educational paradigms has resulted in research that constructs social reality in sexually dichotomous and patriarchal forms, determining what is worthy of study and how it is to be studied (Thibault, 1988, p. 75). Mainstream educational journals either ignore women or sponsor special issues rather than providing sustained consideration of

feminist research (see DuBois et al, 1985).

Feminist scholarship in education is concerned with the development of a feminist pedagogy which attempts to transform teaching and learning by the empowerment of teachers and students. Closely related to this movement toward a feminist pedagogy is a national effort to reform and professionalize teaching and to restructure the training of school administrators. In reviewing the literature, it is apparent that the foundations of educational research are derived from several disciplines in the social sciences (psychology, sociology, and politics) and the humanities (history and philosophy), each with its distinctive methodology, assumptions, and outcomes. Feminist scholarship brings to each of these disciplines various perspectives of its own -- from liberal humanist and marxist-socialist to radical poststructuralist -- which have resulted in a bitter ideological debate among feminists that is as yet unresolved (Eisenstein, 1983; Harding, 1987; Hutcheon, 1989; Tong, 1989).

Feminist Critiques of Research on Teaching and Learning

If we look at the development of feminist pedagogy, we become aware of a movement among women psychologists, curriculum theorists, and faculty to use gender as a theoretical framework through which to (a) critique male-dominated theories, particularly the dichotomy between theory and practice, (b) reconceptualize teaching and learning, and (c) restructure the educational system.

The first wave of school reform that occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s is notable for its lack of participation by

women. Influential figures of that period include James Conant, Jerome Bruner, Benjamin Bloom, and B. F. Skinner, mainly advocates of an instrumental model of teaching and learning based on concepts of hierarchical knowledge and technical rationality. It was the civil rights movement and ensuing legislation that heightened consciousness regarding sexism in our society, and led to the rise of feminism as a movement by 1970. However, the radical school reform movement of the early 1970s continued to be dominated by male educators and sociologists such as Paul Goodman, Ivan Illich, John Holt, and Jonathan Kozol, all of whom ignored the woman question in their critiques. One striking example of male bias of that period is contained in Jencks and Reisman's Academic Revolution (1968, p. 307) who express the view that "girls in women's colleges seem to worry as much about being really feminine as girls in coeducational colleges," that to be academically motivated, some girls need "the stimulus of male rebellion and aggressiveness," and that humane undergraduate male professors who are popular with female students are likely to be rejected as "sissies and fairies" (p. 307).

Maxine Greene, one of the early feminist critics writing on education, suggests that the reason educators did not appreciate the dimensions of the problem was the unexamined assumptions they shared, namely that women and men occupy separate spheres (which she traces to the Greek polis), have insuperable biological and temperamental differences, and exhibit feminine virtues that need to be developed as part of their education (Greene, 1978, p. 247).

She links women's association with the natural rather than the sociopolitical order as a function of political, social, and economic arrangements that continue to thwart women's sexual equality (Greene 1985, p. 31). Jane Martin (1985) takes a similar position in her critique of five classical educational theorists, two males (Plato and Rousseau) and three females (Gilman, Beecher, and Wollstonecraft), arguing that the productive/reproductive dichotomy which identifies qualities of rationality and objectivity as masculine and qualities of nurturance and caring as feminine is indicative of the cultural constraints and unexamined assumptions that continue to impede us in restructuring education.

Critiques of male psychologists, Jean Piaget and Eric Erickson were undertaken by Carol Gilligan (1982) who criticized their use of data derived from research on males to develop stage theories of cognitive and psychosocial development. In using gender as an analytic category, Gilligan and her colleagues at Harvard's Center for Gender, Education, and Values explore the relationship between moral voice, moral orientation, and gender, remapping Lawrence Kohlberg's conceptualization of the moral domain to reflect how women develop an ethic of care and connection as distinct from a male ethic of justice and autonomy (1988, 1990).

Reconceptualization of teaching and learning

Reconceptualization of teaching and learning is taking two paths, and while the agendas sometimes converge, their rationales appear to be quite different. The top-down approach, which has a distinctly scientific flavor to it, is dominated by the educational

establishment, private foundations, state boards of regents, and professional associations. This approach is characterized by the rhetoric of task force reports and state action plans whose recommendations focus on standards, accountability, achievement, and outcomes, linking the restructuring of schools to such mechanistic approaches as school-based management teams, increased graduation and certification requirements, longer school days, and statewide (or even national) mandated curricula and test administration. [1]

A feminist approach to teaching and learning, on the other hand, is embodied in the integration of gender analysis with political, phenomenological, and poststructualist perspectives. Feminist pedagogy takes a collaborative approach to critical inquiry that empowers the researched, builds emancipatory theory, and moves toward the establishment of data credibility within "praxis-oriented, advocacy research" (Lather, 1986, p. 272). It rejects male-centered curriculum criticism, substituting approaches grounded in women's experience. Feminist research methodologies employ experiential analysis, symbolic interactionism, social reconstruction of reality theories, and humanistic philosophy in which the researcher is at the center of what is being researched in a conscious effort to break down the dualism of subjective/objective knowledge (Reinharz 1983; Grumet 1988). Thus, we have the use of autobiography (Grumet, 1988), and biographic narrative through dialogic journals, participant observation, and record keeping (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). Two recent studies

show how feminist pedagogy can be used to empower students and teachers. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) uses a feminist poststructuralist perspective to explore the use of critical pedagogy in teaching a course on anti-racism (See also Correspondence, 1989 for responses to Ellsworth's article). In recounting the difficulties that teacher and students encountered in attempting to work through concepts of empowerment, critical reflection, and student voice, she makes a stong argument that to empower students means breaking down the dualism of teacher/taught or knower/known and building new coalitions across cultural identities.

Janet Miller has undertaken another more phenomenological approach to empowerment research, using the construct of teacher-as-researcher (1990). Through a lengthy process of collaborative inquiry involving out-of-class discussions, journal keeping, and reflection, teachers learn to question unexamined assumptions related to their own cultural, biographical, and historical situations with a view to achieving closer congruence between their personal and professional lives. Empowerment methodologies are significant in what they say about the professionalization of teaching, because, unlike some of the more recent reform reports, they begin with the teacher and the student in the classroom rather than with a bureaucratic structure that, in my view, perpetuates the dichotomies of theory/practice, research/teaching, and knower/known.

Restructuring Teaching and Learning Through Teacher Professionalism

A Feminist Critique

The feminization of teaching has been the most widely critiqued aspect of educational practice. Early school reform based on a sexual division of labor meant that men obtained the better-paid and higher-level positions while women were channeled into elementary school classrooms. A rereading of John Dewey's monograph, My Pedagogic Creed (1897), in which he characterizes teachers as "the prophets of God," reveals the relationship between gender stereotypes and women's teaching function based on assumptions that are still widespread--women as nurturing, emotional, domesticated, and unintellectual.[2] Jill Conway (1989, p. 144) wonders whether "educational theorists would have designed teaching roles of such preternatural maternal patience had they expected their male colleagues to take principal responsibility for such instruction." Gender stereotypes were of a different kind in male-dominated universities and professional schools in the early part of this century (Glazer and Slater, 1989). Women were expected to sacrifice any semblance of private life in seeking professional careers in college teaching, scientific research, and medical practice, and were likely to be disregarded for leadership positions regardless of their qualifications. Psychiatric social work provides an example of a female profession that became male-dominated as professional associations sought alliances with schools of social work (ibid., p. 180). By 1933, 42 states had mandatory state certification laws which, when combined with the advent of schools of education to replace the old normal schools,

hastened the professionalization process. The low status of teaching became a function of the low status bestowed on feminine occupations combined with the low prestige of teacher education generally (Spring, 1989, p. 49).

Feminist critiques of two reports, Tomorrow's Teachers (Holmes Group, 1986) and A Nation Prepared (Carnegie Forum, 1986) question the ahistorical and gender-neutral proposals which "neither acknowledge nor examine critically the traditional conception of schoolteaching as 'woman's true profession'" (Laird, 1988), and which propose hierarchical (read patriarchal) structures to professionalize and raise the status of teaching (Noddings, 1990). Much of the dialogue that has followed publication of these two reports and ensuing state policies to professionalize teaching show little evidence of gender analysis (see Woolfolk, 1988, which includes symposium proceedings on teacher education reform). Both reports link the professionalization of teaching to the elimination of undergraduate preparation programs, restructuring of graduate programs to emulate the medical model of clinical training, implementation of a three-step career ladder linked to merit pay, and greater classroom management authority for teachers. By endorsing a professional hierarchy and distinguishing between professional and feminine values, feminists argue that these reports embody male assumptions about professionalism. Koehler and Fenstermacher (1989, p. 156)) ask whether "we truly wish teachers to be like lawyers and physicians, or whether [teachers] could be like lawyers and physicians and still retain all that we regard as

excellent about teaching." While it can be argued that discussions of teacher professionalization should be gender-neutral, there is always the danger that such interpretations will be incomplete or erroneous.

Evidence of a lack of emphasis on gender analysis occurs in four major outcomes of these reports: the reconceptualization of the knowledge base for teachers under the auspices of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (Reynolds, 1988), the establishment of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the endorsement of a national curriculum by the National Governors Association, and the promotion of alternative routes to teaching that completely bypass traditional certification programs. The educational summit held at Charlottesville, Virginia a year ago was characterized by Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, as "a historic event...that will shape public schooling in America for years to come" (Fiske, 1989). It recommended "national educational goals" to address dropout rates, adult literacy, drugs, and <u>teacher quality</u>. Notably absent from this conclave was the woman's voice. No woman spoke - nor for that matter did a teacher. My point is that the combined effect of the "summit" approach and commission reports as a means of engendering "reform" sends a powerful message to teachers and schools of education generally that education and teaching are minor professions which benefit from instrumental control by a power elite of state and federal bureaucrats, private foundations, professional associations, and research universities.

Feminist Theory and Business

Feminist Critiques of Business

Feminist scholarship on business has been limited to the liberal perspective, documenting the status of women MBA recipients, highlighting women who have achieved unusual success as entrepreneurs or corporate leaders, and identifying the characteristics of "women-friendly" corporations. Sex equity is the most commonly researched topic, particularly now that the "Reagan revolution" has made significant inroads in reversing affirmative action and equal employment policies enacted in the 1970s. "Feminism" is not a descriptor in business databases and a search of Business Dateline and ABI/Inform yielded only two citations in the category of "feminism and business" and only 10 for "women and business." A manual search of business journals was more fruitful, with the most informative articles contained in Harvard Business Review and Management Review, a publication of the American Management Association.

Two kinds of critiques assess women's role in the workplace. Sex/gender research examines gender as a "sometimes contradictory but always pervasive system of social norms that regulates the activity of individuals according to their biological sex" (Jaggar, 1989, p. 93). The plethora of books with titles like The Managerial Woman, The One-Minute Manager, and Games Mother Never Taught You illustrate the often contradictory nature of the development of

gender norms. While women are admonished to become better game players and to adopt male values as a means of achieving full equality in the public sphere, they are also expected to adhere to feminine values in their professional and personal relationships.

It was only 20 years ago that women were segregated into "so-called velvet ghettos, backwaters such as personnel and public relations that were created when legislation forced companies to hire and promote women" (Billard 1990, p. 26). However, as three case studies of women MBA recipients illustrate, business is still a male province. While women MBAs are able to escape dead ends of traditional occupations, the typical pattern continues to be access but little progress to the top and a persistent wage gap between men and women (Fillmore, 1985, p. 9). A more recent study of women in middle management found women submerging their feminist instincts to adhere to the model of business professional, "not political activists," and generally unwilling to "represent and overtly push feminism at the office" (Freeman, 1990, p. 209). And Women Like Us, a series of interviews with women from the Harvard Business School, finds that this elite group experienced the same struggle in their attempts to succeed in a male milieu (Gallese, 1985). While women are now one-third of all MBA students, and the number in executive and administrative positions has increased from 4.4 million to almost 6 million, only three CEO's of Fortune 1000 companies are women, and women still need a male mentor to support their promotions to management positions (Gallese, 1989). There is an Alice-In-Wonderland quality to articles that spotlight the

handful of women in senior management who have yet to "break through the glass ceiling" into CEO-land. (At the time of her resignation as Secretary of Labor, Elizabeth Dole had just begun an initiative to "remove the glass ceiling for women and minorities" by withholding federal contracts to employers who obstruct the progress of such employees, Dowd 1990, p. A17). A Business Week survey of "woman-friendly companies" found only six called "pacesetters" for placing 20-30% of women in top jobs, providing on-site child care, implementing anti-discrimination and harassment policies, and career development (Ehrlich, 1990, p. 51).

Radical feminists argue that women are confronted with two binary oppositions -- the cult of true womanhood and the cult of rationality -- or domestic, nurturing responsibilities as opposed to "life in the fast lane, bureaucratic upward mobility for husbands and wives" (Ferguson, 1987, p. 52). Ferguson proposes that the feminist case against bureaucracy means "creation of a feminist discourse of protest and vision" that actively resists the "rationalization process." Adherents of this perspective reject the productive/reproductive dichotomy that is advocated by many of the articles on women in business. Implicit in this controversy is the nature/nurture argument which recently erupted in response to an article by career consultant Felice Schwarz in the Harvard Business Review (see Schwartz 1989 and Olofson 1989). Among her more debatable assertions are that women managers cost more to employ than men, are more apt to plateau or interrupt their careers due to "maternity and tradition" and, therefore, to cause companies to

lose the money they invested in developing women managers. She differentiates between "career-primary women," effective managers who serve as beacons to younger women, and "career-and-family women" who are willing to trade ambition for the nurturing role. On the positive side, she urges family support, particularly child care, part-time opportunities, and promotions of ambitious, career-primary women on equal terms with men. The idea of a "mommy track" has been proposed in several articles that focus on child care, flextime, parental leave, and part-time options (Collins and Magid, 1989, Meiers, 1989, Trenk, 1990, Willis, 1989).

Reconceptualization of Business

A third and most important strand of research which has implications for the way we study organizations, focuses on the changing character of American business, and indirectly, its impact on both men and women. Rosabeth Kanter, who refers to herself as a feminist but does not use feminist theory in her research, provides a portrait of corporate America over the last decade in a trilogy of case studies. Men and Women of the Corporation (1977) records life in what she terms a "corpocracy," a stagnating bureaucratic industrial corporation on the verge of obsolescence in a changing world. Women play a symbolic role and the dynamics of tokenism set in motion self-perpetuating cycles that reinforce their low number and, in the absence of external intervention, keep them in token positions (1977, p. 290). Married men and single women are most likely to succeed in the most powerful and best-paid positions and the conflict between family and organization is

unresolved (ibid., p. 290). Her second study, The Change Masters (1983), compares the dominant forces that pit entrepreneurial corporations against bureaucratic change-resisters in a war of mergers, takeovers, and buyouts, in which the name of the game is adversarial change. When Giants Learn to Dance (1988) explores the post-entrepreneurial revolution in which lifetime careers built on loyalty to a corporation are replaced by career mobility based on professional expertise. Kanter suggests that responsiveness and teamwork employing "the four F's - focused, fast, friendly, and flexible" - will replace elaborate corporate hierarchies governed by in-house rivalries and adversarial relationships. In this non-bureaucratic model, the reward system will be linked to accomplishment and contribution rather than ladder climbing (1988, p. 344). Women will participate in this changing career structure through the expansion of professional and entrepreneurial careers built on successful participation in short-term projects, membership on consultant teams, and lateral movement between corporations (ibid., p. 310). Although the fast-paced nature of the post-entrepreneurial track implies greater job mobility, the productive/reproductive dichotomy will not disappear.

It would appear that the radical feminist slogan -- the personal is political -- could be extended to the personal is professional if women are to gain status in the corporate world. As women enter the workforce in increasing numbers, certain problems need to be addressed: restructuring the public and private spheres of human existence, the feminization of the workforce in

a changing corporate structure, and the uneasy relationship between business and professionalism.

Conclusions

I have not discussed the raising of consciousness or the multiplication of women's studies programs and courses, both of which are important, but, in my view, are by-products of the women's movement. While the number of women's studies programs exceeds 500 according to the latest directory published by the Modern Language Association (PMLA 1990), less than 50% are identified as degree programs, mainly individualized majors, liberal or interdisciplinary degrees.

In reviewing the status of feminist scholarship in the professions of education and business, some themes are pervasive across fields while others are more subject-specific. These can be categorized as issues related to the productive/reproductive dichotomies as women attempt to integrate private and public spheres of their lives, and take control of their own destiny. They are implicit in the continued struggle for equal access to executive positions in both school and college administration as well as in the upper echelons of business. Of interest is the emphasis on sex equity issues in both educational administration and business and the lack of emphasis in research on teaching. One can speculate that two reasons account for this distinction: the fact that teaching is considered an extension of "women's work" coupled with its lower economic status in terms of salaries and professional advancement.

The concept of restructuring is linked to a rejection of the traditional bureaucratic, hierarchical model and to more flexible organizational structures. In education, this is being manifested in site-based management strategies linked to such concepts as teacher autonomy and shared decision making based on a rational organizational model. In business, it will mean less emphasis on career ladders and more on project expertise. At the present time, feminism and professionalism are incompatible concepts and I suggest that these approaches will be unsuccessful unless we begin to rethink some of the more basic issues related to how we have constructed the professions, the assumptions on which they are based, and the policies that sustain them. Otherwise, it is difficult to see how women teachers are to gain more than token status, either in the classroom or in their efforts to gain principalships and superintendencies. In business, the problems are doubly difficult since sexual division of labor continues to assign women to traditional job classifications and to thwart access to leadership positions.

It is speculative to suggest, at this stage, that changing the lens in how we study the professions can lead to their transformation. However, as feminists begin to question the professionalism paradigm and to subject it to gender analysis, we can build models that are more sensitive to women as professionals, and to eliminate dualisms that continue to categorize women differently than their male colleagues. For example, it is acknowledged by sociologists of the professions that a code of

ethics is an essential aspect of professionalization. If we explore this issue further from a feminist perspective, the male-developed code of ethics based on moral justice and autonomy may be very different from the feminine ethic of care and connection in which relationships and responsibility are paramount concepts. Recognition of this distinction can lead to a reconsideration of ethical concepts that now govern various professions, including law and medicine as well as education and business.

Notes

1. Several reports critical of public education and its teachers gave a sense of urgency to demands for curriculum reform. See A Nation At Risk (Commission on Excellence, 1983); The Paedeia Proposal (Adler, 1983); High School (Boyer, 1984); and A Place Called School (Goodlad, 1984).

2. There are several studies of John Dewey's ambivalence about women and gender in his philosophical writings. See Susan Laird, "Women and Gender in John Dewey's Philosophy of Education" Educational Theory 18 (winter 1988), pp. 111-129); JoAnn Boydston, "John Dewey and the New Feminism" Teachers College Record 76 (February 1975); and Wilma R. Miranda, "Implications In Dewey for Feminist Theory in Education," Educational Horizons 58 (Summer 1980), pp. 197-202.